

MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS
HELD IN WASHINGTON, D. C., APRIL 8, 1937.

The ninth meeting of the Commission of Fine Arts during the fiscal year 1937 was held in its office in the Navy Department Building on Thursday, April 8, 1937. The following members were present:

Mr. Moore, Chairman,
Mr. Clarke,
Mr. Borie,
Mr. Shepley,
Mr. Lamb,
Mr. Manship,
also H. P. Caemmerer,

Executive Secretary and Administrative Officer.

1. NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART: The Commission met for the particular purpose of considering plans for the National Gallery of Art. A letter, dated March 31, 1937, as to the plans had been received by Mr. Moore from Mr. Lamb, Mr. Shepley and Mr. Borie. (Exhibit A)

Mr. Pope presented progress studies, which showed modifications in the plans submitted by him to the Commission at the meeting on January 29th, and a number of sketches indicating further possible changes. All these were explained by Mr. Pope and were discussed by the Commission.

Mr. Pope pointed out that his entire scheme has been worked out on a modular system, which applies to the entire building, and that if a vital change in the design is made it will affect the whole building. He said: "What I would like to do this morning is not to go into the whys and wherefores; they are subject to the opinions of Mr. Mellon's trustees--the elements in this scheme are variables." Mr. Lamb said in behalf of the Commission, "We are as anxious as you to get the best thing for the Government and as advisers

to the Government we have a strong interest in the building". Mr. Pope replied he was not questioning that, but wanted it understood that at this stage of the plans he did not want to commit himself on some things because of responsibilities he has to his client, there still being details under consideration. The plans are flexible as to the partitions in the exhibition rooms for these partitions can be changed and put up in twenty-four hours.

Mr. Pope then expressed the desire to take up the points and answer the questions raised in the letter of March 31, item by item, and this was agreed to.

1. It seems to us in considering the design for the interior, that the point of view should be taken that the architecture serve as a perfect background for the works of art, bearing in mind that with paintings and sculpture as fine as these, they and not the "architecture" should be the focus of attention. It is from this point of view that we feel strongly that a monumental colonnade in the rotunda is inappropriate to the proper exhibition of painting and sculpture. The same thing is true, if our recollection serves us right, with regard to the design of the two hallways leading from this rotunda.

Mr. Pope said he designed the building to be the background for the finest art that can be obtained, and was inclined to think, therefore, that the building should be of the first quality of architecture. He aimed to give a superlative setting for superlative works of art. He also said there will be no paintings in the rotunda so the colonnade will not interfere with them.

2. The question of skylights which are proposed, should also be very carefully investigated. We all know the constant difficulty and expense in keeping skylights in working order and the difficulty of keeping the air properly conditioned, owing to the great heat that these skylights transmit in the summer. We think that the question of indirect artificial light should be further explored, particularly in view of the great strides that have been taken in this form of illumination during the recent years.

The question of skylights, Mr. Pope said, is receiving very careful study. The question of indirect artificial lighting is not being overlooked.

Artificial lighting will have to be used on dark days and at night. He said, "We are assured that we have more light and more flexibility of lighting than any gallery ever built. All the lighting will be of uniform intensity and varied by louvers." Mr. Pope also said in connection with the subject of lighting the gallery that he had consulted authorities of the British Museum, the Louvre (in company with Welles Bosworth) and the Metropolitan Museum.

Mr. Lamb said he had not built any art galleries but had had experience in exhibition lighting and knew that by artificial lighting conditions can be controlled whereby the intensity of light changes from hour to hour to complement the change in daylight, and further the quality of light can be made the same as that of daylight. "It is for that reason that for exhibits in commercial art daylight is considered very undesirable and artificial lighting is preferred." Mr. Manship said a sculptor's work is often best exhibited by artificial light.

3. We feel that the omission of a proper stairway from the Constitution Avenue entrance is a mistake. A great many people will use this entrance in preference to going up the exterior flight of stairs from the Mall. It seems fitting therefore that a formal stairway should be provided, visible from this entrance.

As to the question of a proper stairway on the Constitution Avenue side, Mr. Pope said he had omitted it because he did not want two prominent entrances to the building; that the Constitution Avenue entrance is intended mainly for officials and employees of the gallery. The main entrance to the gallery is on the Mall side, but any one who desires to reach the gallery from the Constitution Avenue side can do so by means of elevators and a small stairway from the ground to the main floor; it is the same arrangement as in the Archives Building. He felt people would prefer to take an elevator, as they do in the Archives Building and also as in the National Museum Building, at the Constitution Avenue entrance.

The members of the Commission did not agree with Mr. Pope as to the unimportance of a proper stairway on the Constitution Avenue side. Mr. Shepley, Mr. Lamb and Mr. Borie felt decidedly that a proper stairway should be provided for the purpose of exit in handling crowds and also to give the Constitution Avenue entrance greater emphasis; the stairway should indicate that it is leading to the rotunda. Mr. Manship also felt it important to have such a proper stairway. Attention was called to the monumental staircases in the Metropolitan, Boston and London museums and the recent change in the Brooklyn Museum. After full discussion the Commission adopted the following resolution:

The Commission feel that on the Constitution Avenue side it would like to see the stairways given the important position and the elevators a less important position.

4. Major Clarke has commented already on the covered courts in the center of the two wings, in his letter to you of the 15th. Covering these courts with glass would produce an intolerable heat in the summer and would again interfere very seriously with the air conditioning. Furthermore, the type of plant material would have to be sub-tropical, as in the court of the Pan American, rather than hardwood plants, as in the Freer Gallery.

Mr. Pope said: "I am afraid your statement is not borne out by the engineers. There are three or four reasons why this court was glazed. First, the building is used more in winter than in summer. The Freer Gallery court is not so attractive for eight months of the year; only two months in spring and two in the fall are pleasant. For an open court a certain size is required. We haven't space enough for an open court. An open court would mean we would have to have a glazed walk around it.

"In an air cooled building it will be possible to keep a closed court uniform in temperature throughout the year. There are not to be a great many plants in it and they will be so arranged as to be a part of the vista in the gallery scheme." Mr. Pope cited the Frick Gallery in New York, where

a closed court is a success. In the Fogg Museum there is a closed court but not enough plants. Mr. Pope said he would submit to the Commission detailed drawings of the way he wants to treat these courts of the gallery.

5. While we are, of course, not familiar with Mr. Mellon's detailed program, we question very seriously the certain matters relating to the plan as so far developed. The two entrances at the ends with their porches and pediments seem superfluous unless these sections are to hold temporary collections and are to be cut off from the main gallery. We understand that the treatment of these two side entrances, that is, the pediments, is being re-studied in view of our former criticisms. We also question the absence of any small side lit galleries for intimate paintings and sculpture on this floor. Has any consideration been given to a major and a minor route for visiting crowds? Will the gallery walls be of such construction as to permit the size and shape of the rooms to be re-arranged and modified?

Mr. Pope said that the ends of the building have been restudied, and he submitted plans showing the omission of the pediments over the doors. It was thought possibly the doors could be reduced in size. The Commission felt that the revised scheme improves the appearance of the building. The wings may be used for temporary exhibitions. In London there are 1,500 paintings and it will be possible to place that many in this gallery as they are acquired through the years.

Mr. Pope said that for the present each of the Masterpieces will receive three times as much space as those in the London Gallery.

The ends will have good planting; a considerable sum will be spent for suitable box bushes all around the building, in accordance with a landscape plan to be designed.

6. As to the dome, we have already expressed informally to you our misgivings. The other day at the Cornet Club luncheon where an outline plan was presented showing the new gallery in its relation to the National Museum, adjoining, it was pointed out that the existing dome on the Museum would be quite out of line with that of the new Gallery. The introduction of a dome on this building would, to preserve proper balance to the Hall,

particularly on the north side, almost demand a dome on any future building to the west of the National Museum. The effect of the dome on the interior rotunda, forcing a round shape, which is not particularly good for exhibit purposes, should also be considered.

Mr. Pope said: "The fact that the two domes do not line up is obviously on account of the ruling as to the 100-foot building line; my original plans showed the dome 23 feet nearer that of the National Museum".

Mr. Lamb was strongly of the opinion that the dome should be omitted; he said it will cause trouble when the Commission is called upon to advise as to other buildings for the Mall. Mr. Clarke thought likewise about the matter and said he felt the Mall scheme should be considered as a whole without a lot of domes.

Mr. Pope said he designed the dome because it is a vital part of his building, and a removal of it would in his opinion ruin the design of the building. Also he said he was prompted to design the building with a dome since McKim in his plan for the Mall had shown nine buildings with domes near the Capitol. He said: "I was assistant to Mr. McKim before 1901 and was with him a great deal in those days."

Mr. Lamb felt that progress in architecture has been made since Mr. McKim's time and his scheme of domed buildings for the Mall should not necessarily be followed today.

Mr. Pope said that to take off the dome would mean making a greenhouse of his building. He felt his building has the essence of simplicity and requires a dome cover; without a dome his building would not have enough elevation and would not be appropriate for that location. The dome conceals the parapets and makes a covering for a handsome building.

Mr. Lamb said he did not believe that the dome is the only solution to the problem. Mr. Pope agreed that it is not the only thing but that it is the handsomest thing.

7. While we are in entire sympathy in preserving for the more important Government buildings the tradition established by the early Federal Buildings, such as the Treasury, the White House and the Capitol it seems to us that this building particularly has not caught the spirit of these old works of art, but has interpreted the classic forms with literalness and has lost the individuality and vitality that a free imagination would produce.

Mr. Pope said this is a statement that requires an explanation, and asked Mr. Lamb what he meant by it.

Mr. Lamb replied that speaking personally he felt the architectural expression of the building is too literal. "You have done things as your Scottish Rite Temple, houses, which have all the charm expressed in your own personal way, whereas the gallery is too much a literal interpretation of the old classic form, without the freshness that your classic buildings have. The architecture is too perfect and in the perfection of the old classic forms it is apt to lose a great deal of your own interpretation as to what those classic forms should be today."

Mr. Pope replied that the Scottish Rite Temple is more of a strictly classic building than the gallery. "The design was studied most carefully so as to be in the Washington spirit. I followed the early Courthouse design and gave due consideration to the Capitol, the Treasury and the White House. I have been a member of the Art Commission. I have been connected with the work of the Art Commission for more than 20 years, and I have always felt the purpose of the Commission was to pass on the quality of the work presented rather than to pass on the personal elements of the design. But in this design I have expressed my own personal opinion as to what I consider the finest gallery ever designed."

Mr. Pope read the following letter on the subject sent to Mr. Moore;

April 7th, 1937.

Dear Mr. Moore:

I wish to thank you for sending me a copy of the letter of March 31st which you received from Messrs. Lamb, Shepley and Borie of the Commission of Fine Arts, to which I have given careful consideration. I have noted the suggestions with reference to the design for the National Gallery of Art and will be glad, at the meeting of your Commission tomorrow morning, to answer the inquiries made in the letter as to certain features of the building as planned.

As regards paragraphs 5 and 6 of the letter with reference to the general design of the building, and with particular reference to the dome and the rotunda, it should be pointed out, on behalf of Mr. Mellon and the Trustees of the Trust, having the responsibility for carrying out this project, that the design, which was prepared for and approved by the Donor, was submitted to your Commission on January 29th last and was unanimously approved by all of the members present, including yourself, Messrs. Clarke, Savage, Borie, Shepley, Lamb and Manship, all as set forth in your letter of the following day, January 30th, to Mr. Mellon. The Commission's approval of the general plan of the building was made known to the Congress in the public hearings on the Joint Resolution providing for the construction and maintenance of the National Gallery of Art, approved March 24th, 1937, where the drawings of the design, approved by the Commission, were exhibited to the appropriate Committees of the Congress. No alteration to the design was suggested by these Committees at the hearings.

Of course, it was expected that there would be further discussion of details with your Commission during the progress of the work, but, under the circumstances, it was not considered or even contemplated by the Donor that there would be any suggestion of any fundamental change in the design. Relying on the Commission's approval and on the approval of the Committees of Congress, the Donor has felt warranted in going ahead with the negotiations for contracts to erect the building, and these negotiations have now reached the point where any fundamental change in the design would seriously interfere with the commitments which have already been made, and would retard the completion of the building. In addition, any such change would not conform to the design as considered by the Trustees and deemed by them to be desirable.

Sincerely yours,
(Signed) John Russell Pope.

Mr. Pope then called upon Mr. David E. Finley, attorney for Mr. Mellon and one of the Trustees of the National Gallery for a statement expressing the views of Mr. Mellon and the Trustees as to the design of the Gallery.

Mr. Finley said:

"Mr. Mellon considered the type of building for the Gallery. The type of building that was to house the collection was determined by the site where it was to be. Mr. Mellon favorably considered a place on the Mall, and thus felt he should have an architect that could make a design for a building suitable for the Mall. So when Mr. Mellon considered several architects he came to the conclusion that Mr. Pope could make a proper design for the location. Mr. Mellon left the character of the design to Mr. Pope. This design has made Mr. Mellon very happy and he hoped it would make all of you happy. Now if we change the fundamental conception of the building and design a new building it will delay the project for a year or two. These are things we have to take into consideration. This is to be a fine building and the design is well liked by the Trustees; Committees of Congress liked the design and adopted the legislation, and to alter the fundamental conception now would require a major operation."

Mr. Clarke said, "I think personally the architect's personality should be expressed in the design and he should not be hindered by a group around a table. I do not think it necessary to change the conception of a classic design, but a dome on this building will mean a dome on all the other buildings on the Mall and I am not in favor of that. In so far as a building is an expression of the individual that is desirable, but when it departs from that and becomes out of harmony with the whole composition, that is bad. We are here to give our advice, and I think as the years go on we must realize

that there will be great buildings all along the Mall, but to have two rows of domes on the Mall is a thing to be avoided.

Mr. Pope: "The dome on this building serves a purpose and is necessary to the design. To take it off will mean 700 feet of greenhouse glare on the building. I think we can get a building with courts and no dome. It will be a low building, but it will not be suitable for this location."

Mr. Finley stated that all this had come as a surprise because he had understood in general that the design had been approved; they are ready to begin work and to make vital changes in the design will delay the work two years. Further they have received no unfavorable comment as to the design.

Mr. Shepley said that he did not think any one questions the general plan of the building.

Mr. Pope said: "Every drawing has been made by me. I aimed to make a classical building using the Ionic order with unfluted columns. The designs were made by me when I was in a better physical condition. I have taken such a personal interest in the design that I am prepared to say I would be glad to build the building and die with it. This is far more personal to me than the Baltimore Gallery. It is as personal as the little Pharmaceutical Building which I designed in 1908 for the Lincoln Memorial Birthplace. I designed the gallery to fit Mr. McKim's Plan for the Mall, who shows nine domes in his scheme of Mall buildings. I used to see Mr. McKim four or five times a week in those days. He liked to talk about the 1901 plans and the American Academy in Rome, and he always had a high regard for Charles Moore and his work for the Plan of 1901 which he guarded long before the Commission of Fine Arts was established. We have been frank. I have no apology to make.

This building will not go on the lot unless it has a proper elevation. It is more my own and simpler than anything I have done. My whole profession as an architect is standing on the defense of the design and this is all I can do."

Thereupon Mr. Shepley asked, "What kind of material will you use?"

Mr. Pope replied: "What would the Commission like to have used?" It was pointed out in the discussion that all the buildings that form a frame for the Lincoln Memorial are white marble buildings. Mr. Pope said he had been giving some thought to using the kind of Tennessee marble used for the Morgan Library; this after thirty years, he said, is turning white. On the other hand white marble buildings after thirty years become tarnished. For Constitution Hall he used Alabama limestone.

Attention was called to the high parapet wall. Mr. Pope said this is needed to give proper treatment to offices on the ground floor; the parapet is no higher than on the Archives building, to which no objection has been raised.

Later in the afternoon the Commission again reviewed the various paragraphs of the letter:

2. With respect to the skylights, this had been discussed and it was decided not to force the use of artificial lights.

3. It was considered extremely desirable to have a suitable stairway on the Constitution Avenue side. A discussion took place as to how the stairway could be constructed and the following resolution was adopted:

The Commission feel that on the Constitution Avenue side it would like to see the stairways given the important position and the elevators a less important position.

4. Cover the courts as Mr. Pope desires. Mr. Moore said Mr. Pope proposes making the vista restful to the eyes and the courts a feature as at the Frick.

5. The question as to whether the doors at the east and west ends should be made smaller was to be left to Mr. Pope.

6. The following Resolution was adopted as to the dome:

The Commission further recommends that the dome be eliminated.

Mr. Moore informed Mr. Pope of this action of the Commission.

2. MUNICIPAL CENTER: Mr. Nathan C. Wyeth, Municipal Architect, submitted sketches showing suggested locations for the proposed new Municipal Government building on John Marshall Place. Of several schemes submitted the Commission strongly opposed the scheme showing the building placed in the center of John Marshall Place facing Indiana Avenue and blocking the vista from Pennsylvania Avenue to the old District Court House, a fine old building of the early Federal type by George Hadfield. There is a difference of 34 feet in the grade between Pennsylvania and Indiana Avenues and the Commission felt Mr. Wyeth could make John Marshall Place a link between the Triangle buildings and the Municipal Center buildings, including the District Courts buildings in Judiciary Square. It was recommended that the Municipal Center building should be on the squares to the west of John Marshall Place, leaving the two squares on the east side available for other Government buildings. Mr. Wyeth said he could not say when money will be made available for the new Municipal Government building, but the District Commissioners are talking about it and would like to see it built as soon as possible. The present District Building at Fourteenth and Pennsylvania Avenue is very much overcrowded.

The Commission sent a letter to Mr. Wyeth so as to make it a matter of record that John Marshall Place should not be closed. (Exhibit B)

3. LABOR DEPARTMENT TABLET: The Commission had under consideration a design by Mr. Arthur Brown, architect, for a memorial tablet proposed for erection by the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization in the Labor Department building to the officers of this service who lost their lives in line of duty. Mr. Brown proposes to place the tablet on a panel in Pavilion N, at the northwest entrance of the building, using incised letters cut directly in the stone wall.

The Commission inspected the design and felt a considerable improvement could be made in it. Mr. Manship said the letters of the legend at the top should have some variety and should be given more room. There is a great deal of repetition in the wording of the titles of the officers mentioned. The day of the month could be omitted and Roman numerals, such as X for October, could be used. Also the names could follow each other in sequence, rather than one below the other and having each line show name, title, and date of death crowded together. A report was sent to the Labor Department accordingly. (Exhibit C)

4. MEMORIAL TO THE ARMY AND NAVY NURSES: Under date of February 17, 1937, a letter was received from Major Julia C. Stimson, Superintendent of the Army Nurse Corps (Exhibit D) stating that they desire the erection of a memorial in Arlington National Cemetery to the Army and Navy Nurses, at a point near the Spanish-American War section on a knoll 36 feet south of the Admiral Sampson tomb, between Lawton and Porter Avenues. The memorial would face south towards Porter Avenue. A fund of \$2,500 is available for it now, and the cost of the memorial, however, is not to exceed \$5,000.

Mr. Manship reported that in company with Mr. Moore he and Mr. Caemmerer visited the location and after consideration he decided that possibly a sculptured urn would be appropriate for the site, or a sculptured tablet. Mr. Manship recommended that Mr. Edmond Amateis be appointed by the Nurse Corps for the work. The Commission agreed to this, and a report was sent to Major Stimson accordingly. (Exhibit D-1)

5. PAN AMERICAN ADMINISTRATION BUILDING: Mr. Moore reported that a few days ago he was requested by Congressman Lanham, Chairman of the House Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds to attend a hearing on a bill (H. R. 1658) which proposes to place the administration building across Eighteenth Street so as to require the closing of it from C Street to Constitution Avenue and otherwise change conditions in this locality that would be very unfortunate. Mr. Moore said he did not attend the hearing but instead sent a letter to Congressman Lanham protesting against the scheme and advising that the administration building should not be built in the present Pan American grounds. (Exhibit E) The Commission unanimously concurred in this, and felt the building, if erected, should be placed on the triangle heretofore set aside for it at 19th Street and Constitution Avenue.

6. THOMAS JEFFERSON MEMORIAL: The Commission having considered the letter drafted by Mr. Moore for a report to the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission, discussed it at the meeting and the opinion was expressed that few changes in it seemed desirable. Mr. Lamb called attention to a few items, but Mr. Moore pointed out how these were covered in several of the paragraphs. One change in particular was made in the last paragraph so as to include the words underscored in the following sentence, "The open character of the design by Mr. Pope for the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial more nearly expresses the

ideas of the Commission of Fine Arts for the treatment of this area than does the design submitted by your Commission."

The Commission thereupon decided that the report be sent to the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission. (Exhibit F)

The Commission adjourned at 4:45 p. m.

THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

ESTABLISHED BY CONGRESS MAY 17, 1910

CHARLES MOORE, Chairman
GILMER D. CLARKE EUGENE F. SAVAGE
LEE LAWRIE CHARLES L. BORIE, Jr.
JOHN MEAD HOWELLS HENRY R. SHEPLEY

H. P. CAEMMERER, Secretary

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY, NAVY DEPARTMENT BUILDING, WASHINGTON, D. C.

March 31, 1937.

Dear Mr. Moore:-

In answer to your suggestion that the three architect members of the Commission present their comments upon the preliminary drawings of the new National Art Gallery on the Mall, we have, after careful consideration of what information we have had, agreed that the following points should be seriously re-studied by the Architect before the Commission gives its final approval to the design. As you know we are all deeply interested in the success of this great gallery, not only from the aesthetic standpoint, but also from the desire that there will be provided a setting completely in sympathy with the magnificent works of art for which the building is to be a permanent home.

1. It seems to us in considering the design for the interior, that the point of view should be taken that the architecture serve as a perfect background for the works of art, bearing in mind that with paintings and sculpture as fine as these, they and not the "architecture" should be the focus of attention. It is from this point of view that we feel strongly that a monumental colonnade in the rotunda is inappropriate to the proper exhibition of painting and sculpture. The same thing is true, if our recollection serves us right, with regard to the design of the two hallways leading from this rotunda.

2. The question of skylights which are proposed, should also be very carefully investigated. We all know the constant difficulty and expense in keeping skylights in working order and the difficulty of keeping the air properly conditioned, owing to the great heat that these skylights transmit in the summer. We think that the question of indirect artificial light should be further explored, particularly in view of the great strides that have been taken in this form of illumination during the recent years.

Mr. Charles Moore, Chairman,
The Commission of Fine Arts

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EXHIBIT A

THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

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CHARLES MOORE, Chairman	
GILMORE D. CLARKE	EUGENE P. SAVAGE
LEE LAWRIE	CHARLES L. BOWEN, Jr.
JOHN MEAD HOWELLS	HENRY R. SHIPLEY

H. P. CAEMMERER, Secretary

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY, NAVY DEPARTMENT BUILDING, WASHINGTON, D. C.

March 31, 1937.

3. We feel that the omission of a proper stairway from the Constitution Avenue entrance is a mistake. A great many people will use this entrance in preference to going up the exterior flights of stairs from the Mall. It seems fitting therefore that a formal stairway should be provided, visible from this entrance.

4. Major Clarke has commented already on the covered courts in the center of the two wings, in his letter to you of the 15th. Covering these courts with glass would produce an intollerable heat in the summer and would again interfere very seriously with the air conditioning. Furthermore, the type of plant material would have to be sub-tropical, as in the court of the Pan-American Building, rather than hardwood plants, as in the Freer Gallery.

5. While we are, of course, not familiar with Mr. Mellon's detailed program, we question very seriously the certain matters relating to the plan as so far developed. The two entrances at the ends with their porches and pediments seem superfluous unless these sections are to hold temporary collections and are to be cut off from the main gallery. We understand that the treatment of these two side entrances, that is, the pediments, is being re-studied in view of our former criticisms. We also question the absence of any small side lit galleries for intimate paintings and sculpture on this floor. Has any consideration been given to a major and a minor route for visiting crowds? Will the gallery walls be of such construction as to permit the size and shape of the rooms to be re-arranged and modified?

6. As to the dome, we have already expressed informally to you our misgivings. The other day at the Cosmos Club luncheon where an outline plan was presented showing the new Gallery in its relation to the National Museum adjoining, it was

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The Commission of Fine Arts

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JOHN MEAD HOWELLS HENRY R. SHEPLEY

H. P. CALMMERER, Secretary

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY, NAVY DEPARTMENT BUILDING, WASHINGTON, D. C.

March 31, 1937.

6. - continued -

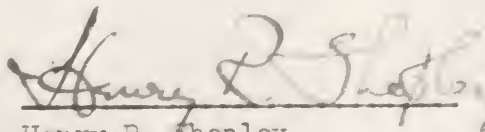
pointed out that the existing dome on the Museum would be quite out of line with that of the new Gallery. The introduction of a dome on this building would, to preserve proper balance to the Mall, particularly on the north side, almost demand a dome on any future building to the west of the National Museum. The effect of the dome on the interior rotunda, forcing a round shape, which is not particularly good for exhibit purposes, should also be considered.

7. While we are in entire sympathy in preserving for the more important Government buildings the tradition established by the early Federal Buildings, such as the Treasury, the White House and the Capitol, it seems to us that this building particularly has not caught the spirit of these old works of art, but has interpreted the classic forms with literalness and has lost the individuality and vitality that a free imagination would produce.

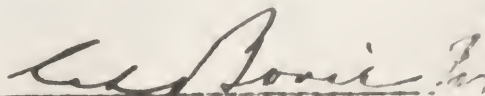
Sincerely, yours,



William F. Lamb



Henry R. Shepley



Charles L. Borie, Jr.

Mr. Charles Moore,
Chairman, Commission of Fine Arts,
Navy Department Building,
Washington, D. C.

C O P Y

April 9, 1937.

Dear Mr. Wyeth:

At the request of the Commission of Fine Arts you were so kind as to furnish informally and quite unofficially a plotting of the buildings to be constructed for the District of Columbia. Members of this Commission were particularly interested in this project on account of the authorized widening of Fourth Street through the Mall, and also the proximity of the National Gallery of Art, which will be a large factor in the architectural composition that will be formed in this area north and south of Pennsylvania Avenue.

This Commission considered alternative sketches, one showing the location of an administrative building for the District of Columbia extending across John Marshall Place; the other placing the building west of John Marshall Place, leaving open that thoroughfare to Indiana Avenue.

This Commission desire thus early to record opposition to placing any building so as to obstruct the view of the old Radfield Court House, which closes the vista of Fourth Street and John Marshall Place. This building, nearly as old as the District of Columbia, is one of the gems of American architecture, and is prized as such. Fitly it crowns the slope, and forms the tie between the architectural development along Pennsylvania Avenue with the municipal group of buildings developed, and developing, in Judiciary Square a group designed in the style and spirit of the Court House itself.

Moreover, a building as large as the Administrative building would throw entirely out of architectural balance the Judiciary group, composed of comparatively small and quiet units.

In the opinion of this Commission the blocking of John Marshall Place would be nothing short of an act of vandalism that would bring continued reprobation on its perpetrators.

Again thanking you for your helpful compliance with the Commission's request,

Sincerely yours,
(Signed) Charles Moore.

Mr. Nathan C. Wyeth,
Municipal Architect,
District Building,
Washington, D. C.

EXHIBIT B

DRAFT OF LETTER

April 9, 1937.

Dear Mr. Wagner:

The Commission of Fine Arts, at their meeting on April 8, 1937, considered the design by Mr. Arthur Brown, architect, which you submitted with your letter of March 27th, for a memorial tablet in the Labor Department building to commemorate the officers of the Immigration and Naturalization Service who lost their lives in line of duty.

The Commission are of the opinion that the lettering should be given further study. More space should be allowed between the words of the legend at the top, as both words and letters appear to be rather crowded. Also there is a monotonous repetition in the titles of officers. It would seem the names from Mankin to and including Scotten could come under the one title Patrol Inspector. Also it would seem that simply the month and year of death is sufficient. Mr. Manship, the sculptor member of the Commission, suggests that to avoid crowding the lines the Roman numeral could be used to indicate the month. Mr. Manship feels that the tablet lacks interest and the other members of the Commission were inclined to agree with him. The use of the incised letter was approved.

For the Commission of Fine Arts:

Mr. W. H. Wagner, Assistant,
Immigration and Naturalization Service,
Department of Labor,
Washington, D. C.

Very respectfully, yours,
Chairman.

IN REPLY REFER TO S. G. O. _____

WAR DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE SURGEON GENERAL
WASHINGTON

February 17, 1937.

The Fine Arts Commission,
Navy Building,
Washington, D. C.

Sirs:

The offices of the Army Nurse Corps and the Navy Nurse Corps would like some suggestions and information about a project they have in mind.

There is in Arlington National Cemetery a pointed plot ending on McPherson Avenue between Porter and Lawton Avenues, which has been designated "Spanish War Army & Navy Nurses". The pointed end of this plot is used for nurses who served in the Spanish-American War and has on it a large rough granite boulder, upon which has been cut the insignia of the Spanish-American War nurses.

The Army and Navy nurses wish to have placed in the larger section of the plot which extends down toward Memorial Avenue and is reserved for Army and Navy nurses, some kind of a stone or monument which will show that this part of the cemetery is dedicated to Army and Navy nurses. There is on the plot a rounded knoll 36 feet south of the Sampson tomb which has been picked out as a suitable place for the stone. The Quartermaster General has approved the erection of some suitable monument on this spot.

Without making a concerted effort to collect funds the committee in charge of the matter already has in hand about \$2500., which has been growing slowly for about six years. It is desired now to increase the fund and to make progress with the plan. Before doing so, however, it is necessary to have in mind a fairly definite objective towards which to work as far as finances are concerned.

It is not the idea of the committee and of those who have already contributed to the fund to erect a memorial to nurses on this site, because the memorial to nurses who died in the World War, which was designed by Dr. McKenzie and was placed in the garden behind the National American Red Cross Building is thoroughly satisfactory for that purpose. The main idea is to have some kind of a simple but impressive indication or marker in a stone, ^{placed} that the place where it is erected is dedicated to former members of the Army and Navy Nurse Corps. The committee will be grateful, therefore, for an estimate of how much money would be necessary for such a purpose and for suggestions as to its form.

February 17, 1937.

It is believed that to endeavor to raise a large sum of money for this purpose would be difficult and, moreover, that it would not be considered suitable to try to do so. To be specific, therefore, is it the opinion of the Commission that our purpose could be accomplished with a fund not to exceed \$5,000.?

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Julia C. Stimson".

Julia C. Stimson,
Major, Army Nurse Corps,
Superintendent.

EXHIBIT D

C O P Y

April 14, 1937.

Dear Major Stimson:

The Commission of Fine Arts, at their meeting on April 8, 1937, considered your letter of February 17th, requesting advice as to your proposed memorial of the Army Nurse Corps and the Navy Nurse Corps in Arlington National Cemetery. On the day previous, Mr. Paulanship, sculptor member of the Commission visited Arlington and inspected the location for the memorial suggested in your letter, namely, on a rounded knoll 36 feet south of the tomb of Admiral Sampson. This he considered to be both satisfactory and appropriate.

As to the nature of the design, Mr. Manship felt that a memorial urn about five feet high, suitably carved, would be a fitting memorial or a memorial plaque mounted on a pedestal.

Mr. Manship recommends Mr. Edmond R. Amateis, DeForest Corners, Brewster, New York, as the sculptor of the memorial, and the Commission of Fine Arts concur in this. It is understood that the memorial will cost \$5,000.

For the Commission of Fine Arts:

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) Charles Moore,

Chairman.

Major Julia C. Stimson, Supt.,
Army Nurse Corps,
Office of the Surgeon General,
War Department,
Washington, D. C.

EXHIBIT D - 1

C O P Y

March 30, 1937.

Dear Mr. Lanham:

With reference to Bill H. R. 1356, concerning the erection of an office building for the Pan American Union on the square of land lying between Eighteenth Street, C Street and Virginia Avenue, N. W.:

The Commission of Fine Arts advise that they support the advice of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission as decided upon by that Commission at the meeting of June 12, 1936, and January 22, 1937.

The Commission of Fine Arts are of the opinion that for sufficient traffic reasons Eighteenth Street should continue without interruption to Constitution Avenue. The intrusion of any building into this important street would in itself break up the deliberately designed plan for the grouping of buildings and gardens of high class along Constitution Avenue west of Seventeenth Street, as already developed with four out of a possible five buildings.

This Commission believe that the completion of this group of buildings as planned is of paramount importance to civic good order and the highest possible treatment of this area.

This Commission hesitate arbitrarily to advise the alternative of locating additional buildings in the property of the Pan American Union. The buildings and landscape of the Pan American Union are today among the most admired of all the sights in the national capital; also they have an international reputation as an example of elegance and good taste. The plaza between the buildings is extensively used for open-air concerts which have become a feature of Washington life. These concerts participated in by composers and musicians of all the Americas have a high cultural value and go a long way to promote those friendly relations which are so earnestly sought.

For the Commission of Fine Arts:

Very respectfully yours,
(Signed) Charles Moore,
Chairman.

Hon. Fritz G. Lanham,
House of Representatives,
Washington, D. C.

EXHIBIT E

C O P Y

April 8, 1937.

Dear Mr. Boylan:

The design for a memorial to Thomas Jefferson, submitted by the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission for advice, was considered at a joint meeting of the Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, March 20, 1937. The formal presentation was made on behalf of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission by Hon. Hollins M. Randolph, who also represented the Thomas Jefferson family. The design was prepared by Mr. John Russell Pope.

The Commission of Fine Arts respectfully report as follows:

The South Axis of the White House is the most important site for commemorative treatment remaining to be developed in the District of Columbia. It is a vital element in a composition that includes the Capitol, the White House, the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial. Its reciprocal relations with these four elements impose conditions and at the same time contribute to the impressiveness of the site.

2. The location in itself is worthy of Thomas Jefferson. Conversely he is worthy, historically, of the location.

3. The present physical conditions of the location are such as to call for a comprehensive and detailed study not only of the

EXHIBIT F

form the memorial itself should take, but also of (a) its architectural relations to the other four elements above enumerated, (b) the landscape treatment of that entire area of the park system with which the site is connected, including both East Potomac Park and also the Lincoln Memorial area on the west.

4. The Tidal Basin is an element of primary importance. It serves the function of flushing the Washington Channel. That function should not be impaired. Any rearrangement of the Tidal Basin should satisfy the War Department. But a restudy of this project in the light of experience and in view of progress in hydraulics should be made by experts of high competence, to ascertain what changes may be made without impairing its service.

The Tidal Basin was designed purely as a utility before the reclaimed Potomac flats were made a portion of the park system. Changes in outline must be made in any event to carry Independence Avenue through to the Lincoln Memorial and the Arlington Memorial Bridge.

The opportunity is now offered to reorganize the outlines of the Tidal Basin so as to adapt those outlines to good park design. Such treatment should enhance the accessibility to, and attractiveness of, the Japanese cherry trees by providing walks along the water-edge, where now exists a rough sea wall. By relating the water to the land in park fashion the Basin should become inviting to boating instead of as now a menace to be shunned.

5. The flow of traffic to and from the Highway Bridge, now amounting to 30,000 cars (including 6,000 trucks) a day and fast increasing, is another element of prime consideration. While a reconstruction of the Highway Bridge in the future is a reasonable expectation, such is not now imminent. Nothing now should lessen the traffic flow. On the other hand, study would reveal methods of improving the present restricted circulation.

6. The importance of making the comprehensive study above outlined, and of preparing a general plan for the entire area, is made emphatic by experience. Before the Lincoln Memorial was begun the area between that site and the Washington Monument grounds had been designed as it was subsequently carried out. At the same time (1901) the Arlington Memorial Bridge project was included in the general plan. Besides the bridge proper, the Rock Creek connection, the Water Gate, the cross axis on Columbia Island, the extension of the parkway to the projected Mount Vernon Highway, and the Memorial Avenue into the Arlington National Cemetery--all were made elements of the one project approved by Congress. For the Memorial Bridge project, exclusive of the Lincoln Memorial and its park features, Congress allotted \$14,500,000.

7. Given such a comprehensive plan, the work can proceed by stages under a continuing appropriation. The total cost of the entire project is bound to be considerable, owing to the nature

of the location and the conditions as enumerated. But the fact that the choice of the site was made by a unanimous vote of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission, and was approved by the President of the United States, is proof positive that this vital element in the Washington Plan is sure to be developed in appropriately monumental manner.

One does not question the amount of money that may be required by the exigencies of a vital site in order to produce a worthy monument to Thomas Jefferson. Such comparisons are unworthy and belittling to both Jefferson and the American people.

Examinations already made prove that the site can be developed at a cost commensurate with the results to be obtained--namely to honor Thomas Jefferson and also to bring a now chaotic area into harmonious relations with the park system of the National Capital. Obviously this development will be accomplished at some time. The Thomas Jefferson Memorial project makes the present time opportune.

8. All are agreed that the memorial to Thomas Jefferson should express his character and achievements. Agreement stops at that point.

If the approach be historical, it may well begin with this characterization, from the brief but authoritative sketch of Jefferson's life in the just completed Dictionary of American Biography:

Modern scholars have recognized Jefferson as an American pioneer in numerous branches of science, notably paleontology, ethnology, geography, and botany. Living before the age of specialization, he was for his day a careful investigator, no more credulous than his learned contemporaries, and notable among them for his effort in all fields to attain scientific exactitude. In State papers he is commonly the lawyer, pleading a cause; in the heat of political controversy he doubtless compromised his intellectual ideals and certainly indulged in exaggeration; but his procedure in arriving at his fundamental opinions, the habits of his life, and his temperament were essentially those of a scholar.

He owned one of the best private collections of paintings and statuary in the country, and has been termed "The first American connoisseur and patron of the arts". Besides the Virginia state capitol, Monticello, and the original buildings of the University of Virginia, he designed wholly or in part numerous Virginia houses, among them his own Poplar Forest, Farmington, Bremo, Barboursville, and probably the middle section of Brandon.

Before the advent of professional architects in America, he began to collect books on architecture and discovered Palladio, from whom his careful and extensive observations abroad never weaned him. Always himself a Romanist, he did more than any other man to stimulate the classical revival in America. His own work, while always ingenious, is academic, precise, and orderly, but, because of the fortunate necessity of using brick and wood, the new creation was a blend, with a pleasing domesticity. He created a definite school of builders in Virginia, sought to establish formal instruction in architecture, stimulated and encouraged, among others, Bulfinch and Thornton, and, except for the fact that he accepted no pay for his services, was as truly a professional as they. It is probably no exaggeration to say that he was "the father of our national architecture".

The above citation is based on the study entitled "Thomas Jefferson Architect", made by Dr. Fiske Kimball, one of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission, Director of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and by architectural practice as well as historical study an authority on the development of American architecture.

Washington and Jefferson set the architectural style of the Federal City by their selection of the designs for the Capitol and the White House. The tradition was established by their choice of Thornton, Hoban, and Hadfield. Jefferson himself followed this style for a quarter of a century in his support of Latrobe, Bulfinch and Robert Mills. That tradition was continued in the designs of Thomas U. Walter in the extension of the Capitol. So the official architecture of the City of Washington was a style based on classical precedents. Such the Senate Park Commission of 1901 found it; and in that spirit they carried on. Nor has there been marked departure since that day.

If then the Thomas Jefferson Memorial is to express the character of the man to be honored, its architectural features should not vary from the classical spirit in which he practiced and which he deliberately imposed on the National Capital. Especially inasmuch as the early buildings have stood the test of time.

5. The design for the Memorial itself, however, while conforming to Jeffersonian ideals, raises questions quite apart from the style in which it is designed. Fundamental among these questions is this one: The Lincoln Memorial, a classical building, contains as its chief feature a statue of one of the greatest of American statesmen. The site is only second to that occupied by the Washington Monument. Is it wise to create on the south axis

a second building the purpose of which is akin to that of the Lincoln Memorial? Will not the two structures so nearly alike in purpose and expression come into competition, even into conflict, one with the other? Would it not be better to make the Jefferson Memorial a distinct creation by an entirely different treatment of the central feature and the surrounding landscape?

10. This Commission recall the fact that under authority of Congress (Resolution of February 12, 1925) the Roosevelt Memorial Commission was authorized to prepare for presentation to Congress a plan for the development of the South Axis as a location for a memorial to Theodore Roosevelt. Thereupon the Roosevelt Commission instituted a limited competition among nine well-known architects, who were assisted by landscape architects and sculptors of reputation. The judges were two architects and one sculptor. The competition was won by John Russell Pope, and the award of the jury was accepted by the trustees of the Roosevelt Commission on October 25, 1925. There was quiet opposition not to the design but to the site for a memorial to one whose place in American history time had not yet fixed. Eventually, with the hearty approval of all concerned, Annapolis Island was purchased as the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial and was accepted by the Government as such.

In how far the results of this competition influenced the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission its members best know. The special character of the design by Mr. Pope for the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial

more nearly expresses the ideas of the Commission of Fine Arts for the treatment of this area than does the design submitted by your Commission.

For the Commission of Fine Arts:

Very respectfully, yours,

(Signed) Charles Moore,

Chairman.

Hon. John J. Boylan, Chairman,
The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission,
Washington, D. C.

